Non-Profit Literacy Programs Targeting Latin American Immigrants: A Waste of
Potentially Powerful Good Intentions

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Due to the growing proportion of Latin American immigrants in the United States, demand has been continually increasing for adult literacy programs for those seeking knowledge of English. Most of the providers of these services, though many are supported by federal funding, are private or non-profit. As private services are mainly available to high-SES (that is, socioeconomic status) Latin American immigrants with a competent or strong knowledge of their native language, low-SES immigrants with the highest instructional needs are most often dependent on charity-based or non-profit literacy programs.

Most of the instructors in these nonprofit settings are volunteers with little to no training in instructional techniques and often little to no cultural understanding of Latin America as a region, much less any specific cultural knowledge of the various national and regional origins and identities of those with whom they might be working. The curriculum used in such programs or content taught as literacy often does not correspond to the content desired by Latin American immigrant learners, and is also often quite culturally removed from their reality. When self-directed participants fail to receive the instruction they are seeking, they often become disenchanted with the process and have high absenteeism within their programs.

The outcomes of such programs are spotty at best; most often outcomes are not even recorded, as such programs are typically offered as supplemental social services that are largely not accountable for their productivity or efficiency. The push for the provision of such services among many nonprofits is typically a sincere concern for the plight of the poor. Among educational institutions, though instructors might have equally sincere motives, such courses are typically offered as a nominal public service. As these

are nonprofit initiatives, there is frequently little to no government oversight of their success. Likewise, because they are not offered as a competitive product but rather as a charitable service, there is little incentive for efficiency or productivity due to market forces. Without instructors with connections to the community, culturally pertinent curricula and with some form of oversight, the result of these programs is often a waste of potentially powerful good intentions.

A solution to these problems is found in the critical pedagogy framework of Paulo Freire (1985, 1993). In Freire's model, curricula are student-generated, in that students choose what learning objectives they most desire and instruction is focused around that, thusly making learning much more real and pertinent than that achieved through standard curricular frameworks.

In this paper I argue that trained community instructors, using Freire's (1985, 1993) model of instruction and curriculum development, working under a demand for true accountability for results from organizational administrators, would transform many existent benignly impotent adult literacy programs into a truly empowering social resource for Latin American immigrant communities. To support these conclusions, this paper gives several case study examples of well-intentioned yet largely unproductive nonprofit adult literacy programs serving Latin American immigrants, with issues primarily involving non-pertinent curricula and culturally distant volunteers. A description is then given of Freire's (1985, 1993; Freire and Macedo, 1987) theory of critical pedagogy, which is used as the model for an alternative instructional framework based on pertinent, student-generated curricula as taught by community volunteers. Case study examples are presented which involve both Freirian curricula and community

volunteer instructors, illustrating the benefits of each. To conclude, there is a discussion of whether a nonprofit setting is the best format in which these principles could be applied, or whether private or government ventures might actually be more successful. Within a nonprofit framework, there is a discussion of how these principles might be more effectively implemented, given the lack of government or market forces governing such a setting.

Literature Review

As stated by Guth (1993), nonprofit adult literacy or ESL programs come in several different forms: there are Community-Based Organizations, or CBOs (533), which are located in and staffed by the community they serve. They often serve a population that is homogeneous in its country of origin and its language use (e.g. the Haitian community served by the Haitian Multi-Service community center in Dorchester, MA). In a CBO, literacy teachers typically come from the community being served, with a curriculum that focuses on the particular experience of that community.

Secondly, there are community college ESL programs (Guth, 1993, 533-534), which often serve large numbers. These classes are typically "preacademic", in that they are meant as preparatory classes for further academic work within the community college system. At other times, community colleges offer community-centered ESL classes which are not meant as preacademic, but are rather offered as a public service.

Thirdly, there are workplace literacy programs (Guth, 1993, 534), which usually operate on site and provide only the specific language and literacy skills needed to perform well in the job positions at a given site. The curriculum of such programs is typically geared toward the demands of the work environment.

Lastly, there are adult schools (Guth, 1993, 534), which typically have an ethnically diverse mix of students, and experience difficulties providing ESL activities which are appropriate and pertinent to all participants. As will be seen in the principles and examples cited later, several of these types of literacy programs (especially those done by CBOs and workplace literacy programs) are more effective than others.

First Problem: Volunteer Workforce

One of the primary sources of difficulty in nonprofit ESL literacy programs is the relative teaching ability of the heterogeneous volunteer workforce. Most nonprofit programs who offer such courses have restricted funds, and most of the immigrants in need of such services do not have the financial resources to turn to private for-profit alternatives. As a result, free nonprofit programs have a demand which far exceeds supply, and thus are heavily dependent on volunteer instructors (Bradley, 1998, 192-193). The inadequate preparation of these volunteer instructors is considered one of the primary weaknesses of adult basic education (ABE) and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs (Kutner et al., 1992, cited in Bradley, 1998, 62).

Volunteer ESL literacy tutors tend to fit one of four profiles (Bradley, 1998, 194-195): former or retired teachers, advanced ESL students, bilingual high school or undergraduate students, and community leaders. According to Ellis (1993), the average literacy volunteer in the United States is a middle-class, retired white female.

Volunteerism in general has gone through several strong increases and decreases in the last few decades—after a great decrease in the late 1980s and early 1990s, volunteerism increased dramatically in the late 1990s. This was in part due to the increase in nonprofits, as well as the demonstrable benefits of volunteering (such as job

skills and so forth) in a variable economy (Bradley, 1998, 51-52). As noted in *The New York Times*, volunteering only tends to increase in times of economic recession (Bosman, March 15, 2009), as job applicants turn to volunteering to improve job prospects. Such times of economic duress have also increased the reliance of nonprofits upon unpaid volunteers, as economic forms of support dry up.

However necessary, though, dependence on a volunteer workforce has often been what prevents otherwise potentially successful ESL literacy programs from growing. In the case described by Bradley (1998), a citywide campaign run by the San Antonio public library system offered annual classes in ESL and Adult Basic Literacy. Due to economic constraints in the late 1990s and lessening numbers of instructors, solicitations were made to the public for volunteers—of those who responded, 50 signed up for ESL training, and of those only 22 filled out the paperwork to begin training (Bradley, 1998, 69-70).

Most of the volunteers were driven out of personal feelings of generosity, civic responsibility and ethical concern for the program's participants (Bradley, 1998, 95). However, despite good intentions, a significant number of instructors dropped out of the program, citing time constraints (Bradley, 1998, 160). As Ellis (1993) notes, though people are volunteering more and more, they tend to stay away from long-term commitments such as the San Antonio library program.

This example leads the reader to question, what could be done to improve the retention of teachers in such programs? One problem may lie in the population being tapped for volunteer work. In this ESL program, most new volunteers being studied were Anglo (Bradley, 1998, 110), and thus did not belong to or have strong ties to the

primarily Latin American population with which the program worked. As a result, they

had few compelling reasons to continue their service when time constraints presented

themselves. On the other hand, the majority of veteran volunteers who had stayed on for

years were Hispanic and bilingual (Bradley, 1998, 110). It can be inferred that the

stronger the ties held by instructional volunteers to the community being served, the

greater the desire to continue that service. Without a body of committed instructors,

nonprofit literacy ESL programs will never be able to fully meet demand.

Second Problem: Irrelevant Curricula

Another issue with many existent nonprofit literacy ESL programs is their

curricula's lack of pertinence to the lives of immigrant participants. Schalge and Soga

(2008), in their study of ESL classes at the Roosevelt Community Center in southern

Minnesota, saw a great degree of absenteeism and a lack of retention among migrant

students (151-152). Other studies (Kerka, 1995; Tracy-Mumford & Baker, 1994) have

asserted that absenteeism is the biggest difficulty facing adult ESL programs today. In

the case of Schalge and Soga (2008), ethnographic data suggested that learners'

dissatisfaction with the program primarily came from anxiety about the seeming

arbitrariness of the program's learning goals, and a lack of ownership in their learning

process. Many of these learners came to the program with a strong sense of self-

directedness and strong opinions about what they desired to get out of their courses—

when these personal needs were not met, students felt frustrated and bored and eventually

stopped coming (Schalge and Soga, 2008, 153).

This problem was exacerbated by the fact that teachers in the program largely

would attribute absences to economic and familial factors outside the program, and were

reluctant to critically assess their own teaching styles and curricula. This reluctance was partly driven by a sense of helplessness on the part of teachers. This helplessness was rooted in the effects of the program's open-door enrollment policy—so as to maximize attendance hours and fit funding policies, new students could enroll at any time and participate alongside their more advanced peers. This resulted in classes with very heterogeneous levels of understanding, thus making it very difficult for teachers to organize their lessons in a coherent and progressive manner (building steadily upon previous vocabulary and skills) without leaving behind the constant flux of new learners (Schalge and Soga, 2008, 155). In summary, the apparent arbitrariness of any given lesson's learning goals and the inability felt by teachers to attend to all students' needs led to student frustration and resultant absenteeism.

Another case study of ESL programs in New York further displays the difficulties which come from using a curriculum that is not pertinent to the lives of learners. Lucia Buttaro (2004) studied the experiences of eight adult Latinas studying in adult ESL programs, interviewing the women and observing them in class over the course of a year and a half. Though these women had jobs and families and other structural barriers impeding their study, they firmly believed that learning English would open doors to them in terms of employment (Buttaro, 2004, 30). The program in which these women studied focused on providing English language "survival skills", or the bare minimum needed to join the workforce (Buttaro, 2004, 24).

However, Buttaro's study finds these basic skills programs lacking, as they do not address the broader issues surrounding immigrants' lives. Participants' access to resources, family literacy needs, personal and professional aspirations, cultural beliefs

and traditions are not taken into account by these programs (Buttaro, 2004, 37), and thus they may not provide the skills which participants actually need. Buttaro's (2004) study reinforces the need for a pedagogical system which allows for student participation in the development of learning goals, such as that which will be described below.

Critical Pedagogy Theoretical Framework: Need for Pertinent Curricula

Critical pedagogy, a system built and primarily theorized by Paulo Freire (1985, 1993), is an empowerment-based model that pushes both students and teachers to question any and all oppressive or unequal conditions in which they find themselves, whether they are based on race, sex, class, or any other form of discrimination (Chung, 2006, 8-9). Critical pedagogy pushes teachers to "strive to develop a pedagogy equipped to provide both intellectual and moral resistance to oppression, one that extends the concept of pedagogy beyond the mere transmission of knowledge and skills and the concept of morality beyond interpersonal relations" (McLaren, 1994, 30).

With regards to literacy instruction, Freire's experience was in teaching literacy to adult learners in rural, poor peasant communities in Brazil. The Movement for Popular Culture, started in Brazil by Freire, was created to help Brazil's poor "shake free of shackles of the past through transformative educational praxis" (O'Cadiz et al., 1998, 21). The model was meant not just to make the poor literate, but to "give them the tools to change their reality" (O'Cadiz et al., 1998, 21).

Literacy instruction in Freire's model was built on a student-generated system, in which students chose what words or groups of words they would learn, thus giving the written word a stronger sense of relevance and reality in their daily lives (Spener, 1993). Thus, as opposed to a strict curriculum based on a "banking education" system in which

students are seen as "empty vessels" to be filled with the literacy content chosen by their instructors or curriculum developers (Freire, 1985, 1993, quoted in Chung, 2006, 9), students were able to direct their own learning so as to gain the literacy skills most pertinent to and needed in their own cultural and professional context. Using democracy as not only an ideological framework but as an educational method (O'Cadiz et al., 1998, 246), literacy curricula becomes intensely more meaningful in the lives of students.

Indeed, Paulo Freire's explicit purpose in creating this system was to not just make learning meaningful, but to foster pride and self-respect among students, providing them with a means of struggle and power (O'Cadiz et al., 1998, 21). Literacy learning can be a powerful force in this sense because, as Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo (1987) point out, "language and reality are dynamically interconnected" (29). When literacy curricula have no visible tie to the reality of the students, it loses its pertinence and, to a large degree, its meaning. When there is a clear tie, literacy curricula can be a powerful means of enacting social change.

The inefficacy and meaninglessness of curricula that do not reflect learners' realities is reflected in the work of Buttaro (2004) and Schalge and Soga (2008), as reviewed in the previous section. Beder and Medina's (2001) study of adult literacy programs found similar results, in that though teachers commonly expressed the goal of meeting learners' needs (34), the data collected in the study "saw little evidence of teachers systematically assessing learners' needs or evaluating whether instruction was meeting individual or group needs" (iii).

Further studies reach the same conclusions. Brookfield (1986) states that "more attentive and respectful estimations of students' abilities would facilitate communication

and help students develop ownership of their learning" (cited in Schalge and Soga, 2008, 159). Knowles (1970) asserts that instructors should maintain a respectful learning environment, make learners active participants in curriculum development, and give them the tools to monitor their own progress. As adult learners are self-directed learners capable of guiding their own knowledge acquisition, teachers and students should consider themselves "joint inquirers" (Knowles, 1970, 41). Weinstein-Shr (1993) suggests that adult learners have their own purposes for literacy, separate from (and occasionally oppositional to) the goals of teachers, and a collaborative process is needed in instruction which builds on family strengths and acknowledges participants' home culture (cited in Howell and Hebert, 1995, 8).

In terms of motivations for Latin American immigrants to participate in adult literacy education, self-improvement is one of the primary motivational factors. Beder & Valentine (1987, 1990) conducted studies of adult ESL programs in Iowa, finding that learners' motivation was motivated by self-improvement, a desire to help one's children, to find employment, and to simply be able to read and write (cited in Schalge and Soga, 2008, 153). These same motivations are corroborated by Crandall and Peyton's (1993) survey of adult ESL literacy participation (cited in Chung, 2006, 16-17). In simple terms, Crandall (1993) states that ESL students think learning English will "improve their general situation" and help them "obtain some control or power over their lives" (3). Immigrant students deserve ESL curricula that help them achieve these specific and clearly documented goals.

Pertinent Curricula: Positive Case Studies

Pamela Ferguson (1998) taught adult ESL at a community college in Washington using a Freirian problem-posing approach to teaching. She built the curricula with student input during the class, using her students' prior knowledge, linguistic and educational background, and personal aspirations as the foundation for her class' curriculum.

For example, she derived a lesson on the area's growing crime rate from input from her students. To make this lesson more real in her students' lives, the class practiced their literacy skills by writing to the city's police chief. These pertinent lessons, based on participants' own worries and experiences, facilitated the students' sense of ownership in their learning. This sense of ownership grew to where, when the ESL program was under threat of closure due to lack of funding, the class lobbied the State government through letters to maintain the program and gained continued funding (Chung, 2006, 21-22). This experience truly empowered students through literacy. As one student said upon graduating, "we do not need you [i.e. Ferguson] to speak for us anymore. We have learned to speak for ourselves" (Ferguson, 1998, 9). In general, Ferguson (1998) was a strong advocate for using the classroom as a vehicle wherein real issues facing students could be addressed and solved using literacy skills, making the process of literacy learning much more vital and practical than if it were solely contained within classroom walls (13).

Community Volunteers

This type of empowering Freirian framework is possible even when the instructors involved are relatively untrained community volunteers. As noted above, the primary reason why volunteers were not as successful as they could have been in

Bradley's (1998) study of the San Antonio Library's ESL literacy program is because of

their lack of connection to the communities in which they worked (196). In Modiano's

study (1968) of Spanish literacy acquisition among Mexican indigenous people, learners

taught by indigenous members of their own community with little training learned to read

in both their indigenous language and Spanish better than those taught by "outsider"

Spanish-speaking instructors (cited in Bradley, 1998, 52). Formal outside training is thus

not only unnecessary, but can actually be an impediment to student progress in certain

contexts.

     When ESL or literacy instructors are community members, they share a cultural

and linguistic background that allows them to draw on culturally familiar discourse

forms. As Bradley (1998) states, "people from learners' communities are in a unique

position to elicit and facilitate learning around the learners' life experiences because they

have shared experiences and can understand them" (53-54). Thonis (1990) also notes

that teachers of ESL students should be understanding of students' realities and know the

history and heritage of the community in which they work. Such understanding is

maximized when the instructors themselves come from that community.

Community Volunteers: Positive Case Study

     Hornberger and Hardman (1994) studied the teaching practices in a Puerto Rican

GED class. In this class, Puerto Rican cultural elements and institutions were used as the

basis for all instruction. This was made possible by the shared cultural background of

both students and teachers. This approach not only made the instruction more pertinent

to the learners, but it legitimized their Puerto Rican identity in an institutional educational

context. As stated by Bradley (1998), this shared cultural background between teachers

and students is critical for literacy acquisition, whether in a first or second language context (54).

Pertinent Curriculum and Community Volunteers Combined: Positive Case Study

Elsa Auerbach (1996, cited in Chung, 2006, 19-20) has extensively studied adult ESL programs in Boston that exemplify the positive characteristics of successful adult ESL programs mentioned up to this point.

Her research produced a guidebook for teaching ESL that served two populations: educated immigrant populations as well as uneducated ones. Firstly, the program included a model of teaching adult ESL that builds on the inherent strengths of well-educated immigrants who cannot speak English. The model involved teaching this population English at the same time as Freirian participatory teaching techniques. These students are then used to teach the second population, that of immigrants with little education. This model (similar to that of CBOs as earlier outlined by Guth [1993]) is called by Auerbach (1996) teaching "from the community to the community" (xi). The pedagogical technique was highly Freirian, emphasizing "that the context of instruction should be linked to meaningful authentic language and literacy use (rather than focusing on abstract, decontextualized decoding skills or generic topics)" (Auerbach, 1996, 11). Like Pamela Ferguson's (1998) program, lessons were focused around problem solving and applying learned material to the students' daily reality (Auerbach, 1996, 12). Though lesson outcomes were occasionally problematic when they dealt with emotionally difficult subject matter (such as cultural taboos or political violence from one's home country), the project was a transformative and empowering experience for its participants.

<u>Discussion: How to Move Forward in a Nonprofit Setting</u>

The previous sections have clearly identified, through both theoretical works and positive and negative case studies, ways in which community-based instructors and culturally pertinent, student-created curricula can vastly improve adult ESL instruction in the United States. The greater difficulty lies in implementation of these principles.

For example, in Bradley's (1998) piece on the San Antonio public library ESL program, it is clear that local volunteers (or volunteers with some familial or cultural connection to the primarily Latin American population being served) stay within the program much longer, and are thus preferable. However, as the program is nonprofit and thus has limited resources, there are few means by which the program could recruit such "preferable" volunteers. Bradley (1998) recommends that the administrators of the program seek funding to train community residents as volunteers and, depending on the resources available, perhaps even as employees (196). Such a suggestion would greatly improve the retention of instructors, and would provide a needed source of income within the community as well. However, such funding is dependent on external actors who may or may not decide to provide it.

In Schalge and Soga's (2008) case study of a Minnesotan literacy program, funding is likewise a problematic actor, though in a different manner. The attendance requirements accompanying government funding are what lead to the program's "open door" enrollment policy and resultant lack of curricular coherence (Schalge and Soga, 2008, 155). Theoretically, one of the benefits of civil society and nonprofit endeavors is that they do not have the same constraints as government programs, giving them greater independence and ability to innovate. However, as many nonprofits are funded with

government money, that relative "independence" becomes more often than not purely theoretical.

In the positive case studies cited, it was precisely this independence which facilitated their success. In Ferguson's (1998) ESL class in Washington, she was allowed to implement an innovative Freirian curriculum. Indeed, when her funding was in jeopardy she was able to use that very curriculum to organize her students and petition for continuation of funding (Chung, 2006, 21-22). Her case is an example of how Freirian pedagogical techniques can be used as an advocacy and program survival mechanism, as well as for their instructional efficacy. Even when nonprofit programs find themselves in dependent economic relationships with government or private funding sources, Freirian techniques can be used as a means of seeking such money.

In the case of the Puerto Rican GED class monitored by Hornberger and Hardman (1994), the ability of the program to pick its own instructors (and thus pick Puerto Rican community members who can be more effective in their instruction) was also key the program's success. Auerbach's (1996) success in her Boston ESL program was also dependent on her ability to develop her own Freirian curriculum and pick community members as future instructors. In each positive example cited, a relative degree of organizational or programmatical independence is what allowed each program to choose to use the effective techniques which were essential to their success.

One question, then, is how this relative independence can be guaranteed. There have been instances in which such autonomy can be found even within government programs, such as during Paulo Freire's tenure as the secretary of education for the municipality of São Paulo, Brazil in the early 1990s (O'Cadiz et al., 1998). During his

tenure, Freire incorporated his own pedagogical techniques into the formal municipal education system. Under his supervision, schools became focused on local community empowerment.

Formal schools incorporated Freire's critical pedagogical framework in their teaching of school-age children, and an additional government program was begun to teach adult literacy courses (O'Cadiz et al., 1998, 21-22). The purpose of this revised system was to help students (both children and adults) become "protagonists of their own history" (O'Cadiz et al., 1998, 22). This system achieved true systemic change, as student retention rates rose throughout the municipality and the best teachers were effectively recruited into the hardest schools (O'Cadiz et al., 234-235). Freire's tenure proved that the innovation typically associated with NGOs and civil society can effectively be incorporated into public policy.

The independence needed for innovative Freirian policy can also be achieved in federally funded nonprofit ESL literacy initiatives, as evidenced by Ferguson's (1998) use of Freirian techniques within a government-funded program. However, not all government-run or government-funded programs may be able to maintain such autonomy.

The private sector could be one strong extra-governmental option for providing literacy services. Freirian curricular principles could be effectively taught by community volunteers in private-sector-sponsored initiatives. Especially given the significant workforce provided for private industry by Latin American immigrants, who in many cases perform tasks requiring some level of functional English literacy, the private sector has a vested interest in the literacy instruction of the immigrant population. Such private

industry-based programs could focus on the functional literacy their employees need to perform their professional functions.

This initiative would likely meet with strong support from the US Latin American immigrant population. As the participants in several of the studies mentioned, one of the main reasons they enter literacy programs is to gain the functional literacy needed to improve their work performance (Schalge and Soga, 2008, 153; Buttaro, 2004, 37). The literacy skills taught in such a private setting would be extremely pertinent to the needs of Latin American immigrant participants, and they would thus avoid the frustration seen by Schalge and Soga (2008).

As numerous internationally-focused adult literacy programs have shown, such "literacy comes second" programs in which functional literacy is taught so as to facilitate a secondary skill (rather than literacy programs taught for literacy's sake) are exceptionally successful (Rogers, 2000). Such programs could give the companies that use them a competitive edge over other companies in terms of worker productivity and efficiency. So long as private industry leaders find such internal programs to be helpful and successful, as autonomous economic actors with full private control over their programs they could maintain such programs firmly grounded in effective Freirian curricular principles without worrying about the possible stipulations of funding sources. They could follow the example of Auerbach (1996) and begin by training a smaller group of workers to be instructors, and thus allow this pre-trained group to facilitate instruction for the larger population of immigrant employees. Using such immigrant instructors would also be much less costly than hiring formally trained outsider instructors.

As evidenced by Ferguson (1998) and Auerbach (1996), the nonprofit sector can also effectively incorporate the Freirian curricular base and community instructor workforce necessary to effectively facilitate adult ESL instruction. However, as Bradley (1998), Schalge and Soga (2008), Kerka (1995), Tracy-Mumford & Baker (1994) and Buttaro (2004) demonstrate, the nonprofit sector can also encounter structural or internal difficulties impeding the incorporation of such principles. Though theorists have attested that civil society organizations are able to provide services in a way that is independent of private market forces and government restrictions (Enjolras, 2009, 766), the real ability of nonprofits to be independent and innovative is not so simple. Nonprofits are still subject to the whims of funding sources, whether those are state-based or private. The ability to practice innovative Freirian pedagogy will depend on the willingness of funding resources to support such work.

On the other hand, autonomy in program development does not always lead to implementation of effective teaching methods. When literacy-focused nonprofits are able to exercise relative independence, not all will choose to use those practices that are most effective. So long as donors support their work, such nonprofits could continue using mediocre practices without any drive to improve. In order for all literacy-seeking Latin American immigrants to find programs that effectively can teach them, there are benefits to having enforcement of best practices (as can be done by government, e.g. during Paulo Freire's tenure) or competition to breed innovation (as can be found in the market).

Conclusion

In summary, this paper has identified two main characteristics of effective adult literacy ESL programs: they have a Freirian empowerment-based curricular framework

which caters to students' needs and involves students in the curricular development process, and they employ community members as instructors. The primary point still under dispute is whether nonprofit programs are the best medium through which these characteristics can be encouraged and effectively "scaled up" so that they can become the norm in adult literacy ESL programs.

In terms of government means of "scaling up", the state could create regulations enforcing the use of these key principles in private and nonprofit adult literacy ESL programs. The government could also go beyond regulation and become more directly involved in the provision of such literacy programs, allowing for compensation of instructors through state funding sources (Bradley, 1998, 186). This would allow community member instructors to be more easily retained. However, due to the prevalence of opinion supporting limited government in American society, such an influx of government intervention in adult-literacy-related social policy is unlikely.

Another option, as previously mentioned, is the private sector. Private companies could effectively implement such programs among their workforce without being restricted by funding policies (like Schalge and Soga, 2008) in their curriculum development. They could also, like the government, afford compensation of local community teachers (as requested by Bradley, 1998, 186).

As for adult literacy efforts within the nonprofit sector, there is typically at least enough openness and independence to allow those programs which desire to incorporate good practices to be able to do so. As in most nonprofit work, though, there are as many examples of mediocre and sloppy adult literacy ESL programs as there are wonderful and innovative ones. As previously discussed, one way this could be curbed is through

government regulation of nonprofit literacy initiatives, or through the formation of some kind of independent evaluative body which could rate nonprofit literacy programs and make such ratings known to the public. This would allow potential students to inform themselves regarding the best programs and make informed choices as to which program they would like to participate in. Such a regulative or evaluative body would allow for greater competition between adult ESL literacy initiatives, forcing those that are content with maintaining mediocre programs and offering them as a civil service to become more fully accountable for their results.

In general, due to the nature of nonprofits and the relative independence they enjoy, the best practices of adult literacy ESL instruction identified in this paper will not become the norm without some form of regulation or market competition. This paper has begun the discussion of how Freirian curricula and the use of community volunteer instructors could become more widespread. Specifically, this paper has recommended the possibility of promoting more private workforce adult literacy ESL programs, creating government funding requirements involving the use of these two practices, and promoting some form of government regulation of nonprofit ESL programs. Further research documenting and evaluating efforts in each of these areas is necessary to advance the discussion of how to best serve the Latin American immigrant population in

their quest to become literate.

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